APPROVED FOR LIBRARIES :

For Peshawar Region, vide Director of Education, Peshawar, Circular No. 31/174/T.B.C. dated 20 January 1959

and

for Karachi, vide Director of Education, Karachi, Circular No. DE/G-XV(10)/26814-964/58, dated 18 August 1959 and No. DE/G-XV(10)5290-5356/58 dated 17 December 1959.

MAHMOOD
OF GHAZNI

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1976

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KASHMIRI BAZAR LAHORE (PAKISTAN)

First Edition 1958
Revised Edition 1960
Reprinted 1963, 1966
Revised Edition 1969
Reprinted 1975
Reprinted 1976

PRINTED AT ASHRAF PRESS, LAHORE, AND
PUBLISHED BY SH. MUHAMMAD ASHRAF,
KASHMIRI BAZAR, LAHORE (PAKISTAN)

TO

MUHAMMAD

صلى الله عليه وسلم

THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

FROM WHOM FLOWS DIRECTLY ALL

THAT IS GREAT AND GOOD IN MODERN LIFE

Preface to the Revised Edition

IT IS a matter of genuine satisfaction to the author that the purpose he had in mind when writing this series of books has, in a large measure, been achieved. The books have met a real need of Muslim youth both inside the country and abroad.

They have now been thoroughly revised. Modifications and useful additions have been made where necessary. In their present form they will certainly make more enlightening reading.

FAZL AHMAD

Central Training College
Lahore
January 1967

Preface to the First Edition

"I AM leaving behind two weighty things, viz. the Quran and my personal example. If you hold fast to these, you will never go astray."

This parting advice of the Master, when made the basis of life, has accomplished some of the rarest marvels of history. It has inspired generations of Muslims to the highest levels of thought and action. It has, during the centuries, produced the greatest of men and the noblest specimens of humanity.

The soul-stirring message of the Quran and the example of the Master have put on a new beauty in the context of each age. They seem ever capable of sweeping away the pettiness and shallowness that dog the path of human life. They enable man, as nothing else can, to take his destiny into his own hands, and rise to the highest sense of duty toward Allah and fellow-men. A life guided by these twin stars never fails to identify itself with the great on-going forces of history. This book gives a brief account of a life characterised by such a timeless quality. Mankind is, at present, passing through a period of unprecedented social change. Adjustment

to the inexorable requirements of a rapidly changing world-order is undermining old beliefs and customs everywhere. Much of this is for the good. However, there is a very real danger that, in the inevitable social shake-up, some of the basic values may go by the board. No worse calamity could befall a culture. The best safeguard against such an eventuality is to remind ourselves constantly how those before us met the challenge of their times, without flinching an inch from the great tradition of the Master. For light on our path to progress, we must turn to those immortal sons of Islam who showed to the world how the example set by the Master could always be capable of a dynamic interpretation.

The set of short biographies, of which this booklet is a part, has been written with a double purpose in mind: (1) to acquaint Pakistani boys and girls with the spiritual possessions of which they are to be the guardians, and (2) to provide easy and interestingreading material that maystimulate love and ability for independent reading. It is earnestly hoped that the youngsters who read this booklet will catch at least some sparks of the fire that inflamed the soul of our hero.

FAZL AHMAD

Central Training College
Lahore
July 1957

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Sabuktagin, Mahmood's Father

IN 954 A.D., a twelve-year-old boy was sold as a slave in a town of Central Asia. His master Haji Nasr, was very kind to him. He brought him up carefully. The boy got good education as well as training in the art of war. The kind treatment of the master brought the youthful slave in the fold of Islam. Haji Nasr was now sure of a good price if he offered his slave for sale. The boy of five years back was now a young man of seventeen. He was handsome and possessed winning manners.

Haji Nasr took the youth to the city of Bokhara. Here he was bought by a powerful noble of king Alaptagin. Soon after, the king happened to see the youth and was struck by his intelligent looks So he bought him from the noble. This thrice-sold slave was none other than Sabuktagin, the father of the famous Mahmood.

Sabuktagin's unusual ability soon won him a place at the court. The king gave him his daughter in marriage. On Alaptagin's death, Sabuktagin became chief minister of the new king, Ibrahim Ibrahim died after a year's rule. He was followed by two more kings. The weak rule of these kings brought the country to the brink of ruin. The nobles, who had known better days, felt the need of a strong and capable ruler. So in 977 A.D. they chose Sabuktagin as their king.

A Strange Dream

During a November night in 971, Sabuktagin had a strange dream. He saw a tiny plant grow out of his chimney. Presently it began to grow rapidly. Its stem grew thicker and thicker and it put out more and more branches. This went on till the tiny plant changed into a giant tree, enveloping within its over-spreading branches the whole of the world.

In the morning Sabuktagin told his wife all about the dream. She was expecting a baby.

"What can it mean?" she said in pleasant surprise, "Anyway, it seems to be a good dream," she went on. "I think it tells something about the future greatness of our coming child."

"I, too, have a similar feeling," remarked Sabuktagin. "We should do our best to

give good education and a proper training to the child when he is born."

A few hours later, the child was born. It was a male child. The parents named him Mahmood, which means "the praised one". But despite all their high hopes, the fond parents little knew what greatness awaited their son. They did not know that he was to go down in history as one of the greatest generals of the world. They little knew that he was to wage a relentless crusade against idol-worship.

Mahmood's Education

It was not till six years after Mahmood's birth that Sabuktagin became king. But even before that, he was a powerful and rich man. He used all the means in his power to give his son the best of education. Learned men of repute were engaged to teach the child. Mahmood was an unusually talented lad. Soon he had the whole Quran by heart. Then he gave himself up to the study of religious literature and got a good insight into all the standard works.

Side by side with this education, the father gave his son a sound practical training. Mahmood was taught how a good ruler ought to deal with his people. Sabuktagin often took his little son into the thick of life so that he might get a first-hand knowledge of things. Shortly after becoming king, Sabuktagin had to go on a campaign. Mahmood was hardly seven at the

time. Sabuktagin left him in Ghazni, as his deputy. A few years later, Mahmood was made the governor of a province.

This practical training made Mahmood a great soldier. He was still a boy when he became a first-class swordsman and a matchless marksman. He was a mere lad when he fought at his father's side in the expedition against Ghaur. Mahmood was only fifteen when Raja Jai Pal of Lahore led his army against Sabuktagin. The courage and generalship shown by the youthful prince in this battle surprised everybody.

In short, Sabuktagin did all he could to make Mahmood a great scholar, a great soldier and a great ruler.

Father's Advice

WHEN Mahmood was a young prince, he had a beautiful garden laid out in Ghazni. In the middle of the garden, he built a fine palace. When the garden was complete, Mahmood invited his father and the nobles to come and see it. The king liked both the garden and the place but said: "My dearest Mahmood, the garden and the palace are really beautiful. But any of my nobles can leave behind such things. A king must raise a building which none of the subjects can construct."

"What building would that be?" asked Mahmood.

"Such a building," went on the loving father, "can only be raised in the hearts of learned men. If you win the hearts of great scholars, you will be sowing a seed that will bear fruit both in this world and in the world to come."

This valuable advice, so aptly put, went deep into the heart of the young prince. He learnt a lesson which he was never to forget. Years later when he was a powerful monarch, he did his best to promote learning and scholarship.

Sabuktagin himself was a kind and just ruler. He was loved both by the army and the people. From a humble slave, he had risen to be a king. He wanted his son to carry on the work he had started. He knew it was no easy task. To prepare Mahmood for the task, the thoughtful father provided him every opportunity, of gaining practical wisdom and learning useful skills.

Mahmood's First Experience of the Hindus

SABUKTAGIN had a common frontier with the Hindu kingdom of the Punjab. Jai Pal's rule extended to districts beyond Peshawar. Sabuktagin was a peace-loving man. He wanted to be on friendly terms with his neighbours. For his own defence, he built a few forts on the eastern frontier of his kingdom. Jai Pal, who had designs on Afghanistan, was disturbed by this act of his neighbour. He could not longer march easily across the frontier. Immediately he started preparing for war before it was too late. He wanted to crush the kingdom of Ghazni before it became too strong.

Jai Pal decided to give the king of Ghazni a surprise. Ohind, his capital, was rather close to Ghazni. To keep his warlike preparations a secret, he moved to Lahore and made this city the capital. Here he

to his cost that mere numbers brought no gain to an army. His ill-organized hordes were helpless before the hit-and run attacks of the sturdy hill-men. Before long, disorder spread among the Hindus. They lost heart, and took to flight. Sabuktagin won a complete victory. Jai Pal's dreams of conquest crumbled to pieces. He had to pay dearly for his treachery. He lost a big chunk of his territory. The eastern frontier of Sabuktagin's kingdom moved to the right bank of the Indus.

Mahmood on the Throne of Ghazni

SABUKTAGIN had made Mahmood the Governor of the most important province—Khorasan.

As Governor of Khorasan, Mahmood lived at Nishapur. His younger brother, Ismail, lived with his father at Ghazni. In 997, Sabuktagin suddenly fell ill and died. As it was unwise to leave the throne vacant, the dying king nominated Ismail his successor. Ismail was a nice young man. However, he had no experience either of war or of the affairs of the state.

Fight for the Throne

Mahmood was amazed to learn that his younger brother had become king of Ghazni. However, he was a loving brother. He had no wish to deny to Ismail what was his due. All the same, he expected Ismail to respect his rights. So he sent a letter to his younger

brother in which he wrote :

"No one in the world is more dear to me than you. I am ready to give you anything you want. But to be a king one needs to be nature, experienced and tactful. If you had these qualities, I must have been most happy to serve you. Father made you king as a stop-gap arrangement. Now give careful thought to facts and do no injustice. You can have Khorasan and Balkh. Let me be the king of Ghazni"

Ismail rejected this offer of peace. Mahmood then sent his father-in-law, Abul Harith, to explain things to Ismail. Ismail refused to listen to him. The only course now open to Mahmood was to fight for the throne.

He started preparation for a march on Ghazni. His youngest brother, Abul Muzaffar, and his uncle also joined him with their armies. Before beginning the fight, Mahmood made yet another effort to avoid bloodshed. But this effort also failed.

In March 998 the armies of the two brothers met near Ghazni. Both armies were equally strong. However, Mahmood was a seasoned general whereas Ismail knew nothing of warfare. The battle went on the whole day. Toward evening Mahmood himself led the attack. Ismail's army reeled under the weight of the blow and fled.

Mahmood was now king of Ghazni. He forgave Ismail and treated him most kindly. One day the two brothers set chatting over dinner. Mahmood asked Ismail, by the way, "How would you have treated me if you had won?"

To this Ismail replied, "I would have shut you up in a fort and provided you with all comforts of life."

Mahmood said no more. After a few days, he shut Ismail up in a fort and provided him with all comforts of life.

Conquest of Khorasan

THE kings of Ghazni were nominally under the Samani Amirs of Bokhara. For a long time, the Amir had an eye on the rich province of Khorasan, but he could do nothing during the life-time of Sabuktagin. On the latter's death, the Amir saw his chance. On becoming king, Mahmood sent rich gifts to the Amir and requested that he should be allowed to keep the territories of his father. The Amir allowed Mahmood to keep Balkh and Herat but took away from him the province of Khorasan. This important province Mahmood did not want to lose. So he decided to take it by force of arms.

In May 999, a battle was fought near Merv. Mahmood won a complete victory. The victory made him the absolute master of Khorasan.

Mahmood Honoured by the Caliph

A FEW months after the fall of Khorasan, the Khan of Kashghar attacked Bokhara. The Amir and all his relatives were put to the sword. Thus ended the house of Saman.

The end of the Samani Amirs made Mahmood an independent king. He married the daughter of the Khan of Kashghar. The Khan was all powerful in Central Asia. Close ties with him brought Mahmood still greater power.

Al-Qadir Billah Abbasi was the Caliph of Islam at that time. He lived at Baghdad. All kings of the Muslim world paid homage to the Caliph. Every new king in the lands of Islam had to sent him gifts as a token of loyalty. Mahmood also sent him gifts as well as the news of his victory in Khorasan. The Caliph sent him a robe of honour and also conferred on him the titles of Yamin-ud-Daula and Amin-ul-Millat.

Mahmood felt overjoyed at the honour done to him by the Caliph. He fell on his knees in earnest prayer, knowing as he did that Allah, the Almighty, is the fountain-head of all honour and all power. Bending his head in all humility, he made his historic vow: "Lord!" he said, "You have showered on me the rarest of favours. As a token of gratefulness. I promise to wage a life-long war against non-believers and idolaters. I will do all I can to root out idolatry."

Conquest of Sistan

KHALF, the ruler of Sistan, was not on good terms with the kings of Ghazni. Mahmood's uncle, Bughrachaq, was the ruler of Qaushanj. When Bughrachaq was away to help Mahmood, in 998, Khalf stabbed him in the back. He sent his son, Tahir, to overrun Qaushanj. Tahir easily conquered this province.

Mahmood naturally disliked Khalf's treachery. After becoming king, he gave his uncle an army to retake Qaushanj. After a tough battle, Tahir was put to flight. Bughrachaq chased him, losing touch with his troops. Finding him defenceless, Tahir slew Bughrachaq.

Mahmood was very sad when he learnt of his uncle's murder. So he had an army against Khalf. Unable to meet the Sultan, Khalf shut himself up in a fort and sued for peace. He agreed to pay the Sultan a large

sum of money as reparations. The Sultan granted this request. Shortly after this, these arose a quarrel between Khalf and his son, Tahir. Khalf slew his son. This unnatural act horrified the people of Sistan. The nobles wrote to Mahmood to occupy Sistan. The Sultan accepted the request. The cruel old ruler of Sistan again took refuge in a fort. The Sultan took the fort by storm. Khalf prayed for mercy. His request was readily granted.

Bent with age, the old man came before the Sultan. Kissing the ground, he heaped jewels and pearls at the young victor's feet. The Sultan felt touched. He rose from his seat and embraced the old man. Khalf was allowed to take for himself as much riches as he liked. He was also allowed to live where he pleased. Sistan became a part of the kingdom of Ghazni.

Khan of Bukhara Defeated

IT was Ailak Khan who, with his Turkish hordes had put an end to the Samani dynasty. However, he was prudent enough to be friendly with Mahmood. The Sultan, too, valued the friendship of the Khans of Turkistan. He sent rich gifts to Ailak Khan and later married his daughter.

Friendship with the Khan of Bokhara, however, did not last long. Ailak Khan had long cherished a wish. He wanted to be the master of Khorasan. For a long time, the Sultan was away from Ghazni, fighting in India. This gave Ailak Khan his opportunity. He attacked Khorasan and occupied it.

The loss of Khorasan disturbed Mahmood. Leaving his Indian campaign, for a while he hurried to Ghazni. From here he marched on Balkh. Ailak Khan appealed to the other Khans of Turkistan

for help and was able to raise a large army of horsemen.

The two armies met a few miles from Balkh. Both sides fought desperately. So many were killed that the ground became wet with the blood of the slain. Ailak Khan himself led a spirited attack. The day seemed to be going against Mahmood. Seeing this, the Sultan at once jumped down from his horse. Bowing before Allah, the Almighty, on the blood-trenched battlefield, he prayed earnestly for victory. Then he rode a huge elephant and led a desperate attack. The example of the Sultan put a new heart into his men. The Turkish horsemen could no longer hold their own in the face of this heavy attack. They were soon on the run and Mahmood won the day.

Slave Cracks a Joke

AILAK KHAN had been defeated on the field of battle, but Mahmood wanted to teach him a more lasting lesson. So he decided to pursue him. It was a severe winter. The army chiefs thought that the chase would wear out the already tired troops. The Sultan, however, was bent on the chase. So Ailak Khan's pursuit began.

On the third night of the chase, there was a heavy snowfall. The chill grew terrible. But several fires warmed the tent of the Sultan. In fact, it was so warm inside the tent that heavy clothes had to be taken off.

The Sultan sat comfortably before a fire. Presently a slave came in.

"How about the chill outside?" the Sultan asked.

"Oh! it is terrible," shot back the slave "I am afraid, many will lose their limbs."

"Well," went on the Sultan in a light mood, "go and tell the chill that it cannot lay hands on us. It is so warm here that we have taken off warm clothes."

The slave stepped out of the tent and came back after a little while.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I conveyed your message to the chill. It says in reply that the Sultan and his nobles are certainly beyond its reach, but it is going to show no mercy to the grooms and other servants of the Sultan, so that in the morning the Sultan and the nobles will have to groom their own horses."

The Sultan saw the point of the slave's joke. Early next morning he ordered the march-back to Ghazni.

Conquest of Khwarazm

MAHMOOD's sister was married to the ruler of Khwarazm, Abul Abbas. The latter had great respect for his illustrious brother-in-law. The Sultan suggested to Abul Abbas that his name be included in the Friday Sermon. Abul Abbas sought the advice of his nobles. They all opposed the proposal. They knew, however, that Abul Abbas himself was very loyal to the Sultan. They knew that as long as Abul Abbas was the ruler, real power lay in the hands of the Sultan. This they did not like. They wanted to be independent of the Sultan. To gain their end, they rose against Abul Abbas and killed him.

The Sultan immediately led an army to Khwarazm. He camped some miles from the city. As his troops were busy in the morning prayer, the rebel nobles made a surprise raid and killed many of them. This

was a horrid act calling for a strong action. When the prayer was over, the Sultan advanced to meet the rebel army. A brisk encounter followed. The rebel nobles and their troops put up a stiff fight. But they failed to escape Mahmood's revenge. Many were killed on the battlefield. The rest were properly punished. Khwarazm became a part of the kingdom of Ghazni.

Sultan Feels Sorry

MAHMOOD had conquered part of the province of Khorasan. Part of it, however, was still in the hands of the Caliph of Baghdad. Mahmood wrote to the Caliph requesting that he should be allowed to take the whole of Khorasan. To this the Caliph agreed.

Mahmood next made another request. He asked for Samarqand. This request was turned down. In his letter to Mahmood, the Caliph said, "Let the Sultan rest content with what he already has. If he tries to take Samarqand, the Caliph will take a very serious view of the matter."

The reply made the Sultan furious. In a fit of anger he said to the Caliph's messenger, "Go, tell your master that I am not afraid of his threats, I know what he wants. He wants me to march on Baghdad with an army of elephants. He wants me to raze

that city to the ground. That is what he really wants."

The messenger said nothng and left for Baghdad. After some weeks he was back again at Ghazni. He brought for the Sultan a sealed letter from his master. He handed the letter to the Sultan saying, "The Caliph says that this letter contains his reply."

The letter was opened, It reads as follows:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. *Alif Lam Mim*. All praise is for Allah, the Sustainer of the world. Blessings of Allah be on His Prophet and his followers!"

The letter was read again and again but no one could make out the meaning of the words "*Alif Lam Mim*." At last a learned man came forward to explain what the Caliph meant.

"Your Majesty" he said, addressing the Sultan, you held out a threat to destroy

Baghdad with an army of elephants. The Caliph, in this letter, refers to the famous Surah of the Quran, 'The Elephant.' The Caliph reminds the Sultan that Allah can destroy his army of elephants as He destroyed the elephants of Abraha."

The Sultan was thunderstruck. For a time he was speechless and almost senseless. The Caliph had referred, in his letter, to the classic destruction of the army that had marched on the holy Kaba. When he came to himself, the Sultan started weeping. Then he sent the Caliph's messenger back, with rich gifts and many apologies.

Other Conquests in Central Asia

CONSTANT fighting was a normal thing in Central Asia of those days. Kings and kingdoms were made and unmade every now and then. Mahmood ended this state of things during his life time. He conquered and included in his kingdom the whole of Afghanistan, Iran and a great part of Turkistan.

The north-western districts of modern Afghanistan were then known as Ghaur. The people of this mountain fastness were a source of constant trouble. They made raids on the Sultan's territory. The Sultan decided to get rid of this constant headache. He himself led an army against Ghaur. The hillmen hit back so hard that the Sultan had to make use of a clever device. He ordered his men to fall back. The enemy mistook this for a flight and rushed out to give a chase. When the hillman had come out in

the open, Mahmood turned round and fell upon them. Many of them were slain. Their king felt so humbled that he killed himself. Ghaur became part of the Sultan's territories.

The Sultan next turned his attention to the tract now known as Wazirastan. The people of this tract worshipped idols. The Sultan led an army against them. They were easily beaten. Their rulers, alongwith the people, accepted Islam. The Sultan appointed Muslim missionaries to teach the people the principles of Islam.

The ruler of Tabristan, Manuchihr, was a vassal of Mahmood. The ruler of the neighbouringstate of Rayy was the boy-king, Fakhr-ud-Daula. He was a lad of nine and his mother acted as the Regent. The Sultan wanted to occupy Rayy. Learning of this, the Regent of Rayy wrote to the Sultan: "I was afraid of the Sultan as long as my husband lived. Now that he is dead, I have no fear at all. If the Sultan overpowers me, he

will be winning a victory over a helpless widow. But if he suffers a defeat at my hands, he will ruin his fame for ever."

The Sultan saw the point and gave up his plan of marching on Rayy. After some years the Regent died and Fakhr-ud-Daula became king. He was a worthless voluptuary. Unrest spread in Rayy. So the Sultan had to step in. Rayy was conquered. Shortly afterward, Hamadan and Isfahan were also taken.

Mahmood Turns His Gaze to India

IN 999 A.D. the Caliph of Baghdad recognised Mahmood as an independent king. Mahmood was very thankful to Allah for this favour. He knew he was the son of a slave. Allah had raised him to power, he felt, for some great purpose. He thought it his duty to fulfil that purpose. And what could that purpose be? Mahmood did not have to think very hard for the answer. The land next door to his own was the land of idolaters. Millions upon millions of men and women in India worshipped idols. They bowed themselves before images carved from rocks. They looked upon the idols as their gods. They did all sorts of silly things to please these gods.

There could hardly be a greater disgrace for humanity. India was a fair land where there was no dignity for man. People believed in the dignity of idols rather than

the worth of man. Mahmood decided to restore human dignity in India. In doing that he was sure to be acting as the tool of the Divine Will. Allah would certainly be well pleased with a man, he thought, who strove to raise the worth and dignity of millions of human beings.

With these thoughts in mind, Mahmood took a solemn oath.

"Lord?" he said in a low voice, as his forehead rested on the ground, "You have been very kind to me. I was a petty chief. You have made me a powerful independent king. I promise to work for your greater glory the rest of my life I will wage a never-ending war against idolaters. I will strive to raise humanity to a higher level of thought. As long as I live, I will undertake at least one campaign a year against the idol-worshippers."

Mahmood kept his vow. He fulfilled it almost to the very letter. The remaining years of his life saw an unbroken chain of

invasions and battles. To the west of Ghazni lay the lands of the Turkish tribes. Many of them had not yet come under the banner of Islam. To the east of Ghazni lay the Indo-Pak subcontinent, world's biggest stronghold of idolatry. In the hot months of summer, Mahmood marched west and fought against the Turkish hordes. In cold winter months, he usually struck at India. All this was done according to a careful plan. Nothing was left to chance.

In all, Mahmood made seventeen invaasions on India. Some of these were mere raids. Others, however, were very important events of history which produced far-reaching results.

The First Invasion

MAHMOOD knew how dangerous the Hindu Rajas of the Punjab could be. They could easily rally under their flag the whole might of India. So the first thing Mahmood did was to make his eastern forntier strong. Several forts near Khyber were still in the hands of the enemy. In 1000 A D., Mahmood marched toward Khyber and took all these forts.

Jai Pal Strikes First

Jai Pal had suffered two defeats at the hands of Mahmood's father. The death of Sabuktagin raised new hopes in the Raja's mind. "I rule a kingdom bigger than Ghazni," he thought to himself. "My people are no less hardle than the Ghazni troops. Above all, Mahmood is a raw young man. Sabuktagin proved too much for me but I can easily beat his son. That would wipe out the

blot of two defeats I have suffered. Moreover, the young king of Ghazni is not yet very secure on the throne. He is busy dealing with his enemies in Heart and Balkh. I must strike before his hands are free. Fate has thrown a golden chance in my way. I must not miss it."

With such thoughts in mind, Jai Pal started preparations for war. He collected a huge army, crossed the Indus and marched into Mahmood's territory in 1001. The army consisted of twelve thousand horses, thirty thousand foot and three hundred elephants. Reports reached Ghazni that the wily Raja of the Punjab was going to deal a treacherous blow. The young Sultan received the news calmly. He had already tested the mettle of the Raja and his troops. With courage and confidence he organized his forces. Then he advanced from Ghazni at the head of ten thousand horse. The two armies met near Peshawar.

A terrible battle raged for a whole day.

Thousands fell on both sides. But Hindu losses were far heavier. As the day was declining the outcome of the battle still hung in the balance. Mahmood decided to finish with the affair before the day was out. With his characteristic daring and dash, he made an all-out attack. The suddenness of the blow staggered the Hindus. Their lines broke and a rout followed. The Hindu hordes fled headlong, leaving their leaders to their fate. Jai Pal, with fifteen of his sons and grandsons, was among the Prisoners of war. A huge booty fell in the hands of the victors.

Mahmood's Large-Heartedness

THE treacherous Hindu Raja was brought before the Sultan. He hung down his head in shame, as he stood before the young victor.

"What treatment do you expect?" the Sultan asked in a gentle tone.

The old wretch kept quiet but made a sign to his son, Anand Pal. The son took a few paces forward and kissing the ground said, "I pray that the life of my old father be spared. I promise to pay the Sultan two million pieces of gold and fifty elephants as reparations of war."

Here was a war-monger. Thrice he had plunged his country into war with a friendly neighbour. He was responsible for the death and sufferings of thousands of people. Several times he had given his word of honour and gone back on it. Now he was pleading for mercy!

No punishment could be too severe for a war criminal like Jai Pal. Mahmood would have been perfectly right if he had put to death this old wretch and his sons and grandsons. All of them were prisonersof war and guilty of unpardonable war crimes. But with a large-heartedness that would put to shame any modern wor crimes tribunal, Mahmood forgave Jai Pal. He was allowed to go away with his sons and grandsons. Only one of his sons was kept as a hostage, lest Jai Pal should again break his word.

From Peshawar Mahmood marched on Ohind, the old capital of Jai Pal. The city was easily taken.

Jai Pal had won his freedom but the weight of his sins weighed heavily on his heart. Mahmood had overlooked his sins but his own conscience would not do it. He found it impossible of face his people any more. Repeated defeats and humiliations had made life unbearable for him. There

was a belief among Hindus that a Raja who suffered defeats at the hands of alien people was unfit to live. Nothing but fire could clean him of his sins. The miserable Jai Pal had to accept the decree of fate. He ordered a huge fire to be built and burnt himself to death.

After Jai Pal, his son Anand Pal became the Raja of Lahore. Mahmood recognised him as the ruler of the Punjab. Anand Pal gave an undertaking to continue as an ally of the Sultan.

Fall of Bhera

BHERA was known as Bhatia or Bhatnair in Mahmood's days. Bajai Rai, the Raja of Bhera, had friendly relations with Sabuktagin. Mahmood hoped that these relations would continue even during this reign. When Jai Pal forced a war upon the Sultan, Mahmood asked Bajai Rai for help. The Raja flatly refused to raise a finger. This was clear proof of his sympathy with the enemies of the Sultan. So in 1003-4, the Sultan attacked Bhera. The Raja fought bravely but was defeated. He felt so humbled by the defeat that he killed himself. The Sultan took possession of the fort.

Mahmood was on his way to Ghazni from Bhera, when the ruler of Multan, Abul Fateh Daood, harassed his troops. Abul Fateh was a bitter enemy of the Caliph of Baghdad but Mahmood was the Caliph's

supporter. It was this fact that had prompted the ruler of Multan to lash out at the Sultan. He little knew that thereby he was courting disaster. For the time being he was left alone, the Sultan being in a hurry to get back to the Capital. However, he kept Abul Fateh in mind. He decided to deal with him when he next marched on India.

The Heretical Ruler of Multan

SINCE Muhammad bin Qasim's days, Sind and Multan had been in Muslim hands. At first the whole of this territory formed one province of the Caliph's empire. Later, it became independent and broke up into two kingdoms. Mansurah was the capital of Sind and Multan the capital of Lower Punjab. Both Kingdoms were ruled by Arab dynasties.

The rulers of Multan belonged to the heretical sect of the Qirmatis. The Qirmatis were a branch of the Ismaili Shias. They did not believe in the Last Day. Good and evil had no meaning for them. Their beliefs were very different from the general body of the Muslims. The world of Islam looked upon them as heretics. The Qirmatis were bitter enemies of the Caliph of Baghdad. Multan, being too far off from Baghdad, had become their biggest centre. Mahmood

was a warm supporter of the Caliph. So the Qirmati ruler of Multan became the Sultan's enemy.

In the year 1005-6, Mahmood left Ghazni to punish Abul Fateh. The heretic knew beforehand that the blow was coming. So he entered into a plot with Anand Pal. The two made common cause against the Sultan. They decided to help each other against Mahmood.

Approaching Multan, the Sultan found the Indus too wide and too difficult to cross. So he decided to cross it at a northerly point, near Attock. From there he was to march south, though Anand Pal's territory. The Raja was bound by his word of honour to allow passage to the Sultan.

Anand Pal, however, chose to follow in his father's footsteps. He turned down the Sultan's request for passage. Not only that, he led an army toward Peshawar to block the Sultan's way.

It was clear to the Sultan that Anand

Pal was an ally of Abul Fateh. So he felt compelled to deal with him first. Anand Pal was badly defeated and fled for life. The Sultan sent a party to pursue him. He was chased up to Sohdara on the bank of the Chenab. From here he fled to Kashmir. The Sultan gave up the pursuit and advanced to Multan.

Abul Fateh had seen the end of his powerful ally. So he did not come out to meet the Sultan but shut himself up in the city. At the same time, he sent messengers to the Sultan, begging for mercy. He assured the Sultan that he and his people would give up their heretical beliefs and would accept the principles of Islam. He also agreed to pay the Sultan twenty-thousand pieces of gold each year. The Sultan agreed to make peace on these terms and the siege was lifted.

Jai Pal's Grandson

ONE of Jai Pal's grandsons embraced Islam. His name was Sukh Pal. After becoming a Muslim, he came to be known as Nawasa-i-Shah or the king's grandson. Mahmood put great trust in him. It was he whom he made his deputy at Multan after the fall of that city. Finding the Sultan busy in far-off Kashghar, Sukh Pal thought of treachery. He captured Bhera, again became a Hindu and declared himself a Raja. In 1006-7, as soon as he had finished with Kashghar, the Sultan marched against Sukh Pal. Sukh Pal was defeated and taken prisoner. When brought before the Sultan, the wretch felt story for what he had done. Mahmood spared his life but put him in prison, where he passed the rest of his life.

The Hindu Crusade

ANAND PAL got alarmed at Mahmood's growing power. He warned the Rajas of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalinjar, Qannauj and Ajmer about the growing threat of a Muslim invasion of Hindustan.

"Let us all unite," he appealed to them, "and overcome the common enemy. If Mahmood is allowed to have his way, he may overwhelm us all one day. Let all of us combine against the 'unclean' Muslims and deal a death-blow to their power."

Anand Pal was able to cause a real stir throughout India. He hired eloquent preachers. They went up and down the country, inciting people to take part in the coming holy war. Hindu India got alarmed and determined to crush Mahmood. Women sent their sons and husbands to take part in the holy war. They sold their ornaments to

raise funds for the war. Poor women who had no ornaments spun cotton-yarn and sold it to make their humble contribution. Never before had India been stirred to such depths. It seemed that Ghazni was going to wipe off the face of the earth.

From all over India, fighting men trooped under Anand Pal's flag. Anand Pal gave his son, Trilochan Pal, the command of this huge army. In the winter of 1008, this mass of humanity started rolling toward Attock.

News reached Ghazni that a huge Hindu host was on its way. Toward the end of December, Mahmood left his capital and marched to meet the enemy. He crossed the Indus near Ohind. So sure was Anand Pal of victory, that no attempt was made to block the Sultan's passage across the river. The plan was to spare to Muslim, after the Sultan's defeat.

The two armies must in the plain of Hazro. For forty days, they lay facing each

other. New Hindu hordes were pouring in each day. The Hindu host was swelling day by day. The Sultan fully saw the danger of delay and got ready for a final showdown with the Hindu Shahi kingdom of Lahore. A deep trench was dug on the flanks of the army to avoid a surprise attack.

At last the battle began. Fierce fighting was going on when all of a sudden thirty thousand Khokhars made a wild attack on the Muslims. Surging like the waves of the rough sea, they overleaped the trenches on the flanks and plunged themselves into the Sultan's army. They broke the lines and in no time cut down as many as four thousand Muslims.

The day seemed to be almost lost. How ever, the Sultan stood firm and composed. He knew that Allah was with him because he was fighting for His Cause. Dismounting from his horse, he threw himself on the ground and prayed for victory. Then re-mounting his horse, he lead a spirited attack

that restored heart to the faltering Muslim troops. With the reserve troops, the Sultan now struck with full force at the rear of the Hindu host. Coming unexpectedly the blow staggered the enemy. Hindus began to lose ground. Presently an arrow hit Anand Pal's elephant. The beast grew unmanageable and fled with the rider. The disappearance of the Raja completed the Hindu rout Soon the Hindu hordes melted away, leaving behind an immense booty.

The victory made Mahmood feared throughout India. He had smashed the combined might of India. The greatest Hindu crusade of history had failed !

Fall of Kangra (Nagarkot)

THE Raja of Kangra was a vassal of the Rajas of Lahore. His troops had often fought against the Sultan It was time that Mahmood should strike at the fortress of Kangra.

Situated in the mountain fastness, the fortress stood on a hill-top. Around it were several sacred temples. People came to these shrines from far and near and brought rich offerings.

In 1009, Mahmood led his army to Kangra. It was a difficult march, through hills and mountains. The Raja had never dreamed that an invader could ever disturb the mountain fastness of Nagarkot. He little thought that Mahmood could lay hands on him. The Sultan took him by complete surprise. Feeling helpless, the Raja shut himself up in the fortress. However, after three days' siege, the fortress fell to the

Sultan. Inside it, the Sultan found hundreds of maunds of gold and thousand of maunds of silver. Precious stones alone weighed twenty maunds. All this treasure was taken to Ghazni.

The Sultan spared the lives of the people. He even announced that Hindus could join his army. The response was satisfactory. From different parts of the country, about ten thousand Hindus enlisted in the Sultan's army. The Sultan formed a separate Hindu battalion, with a Hindu commander.

End of the Qirmatis

ABUL FATEH DAOOD of Multan had promised to give up his heretical beliefs, when overpowered by the Sultan. The promise was meant to be kept. Abul Fateh and his people again became heretics after the Sultan had turned his back. The ruler of Multan thought that the Sultan would never know what was happening in far-off Multan. In this he was mistaken. Reports reached the Sultan that Abul Fateh and his nobles had gone back to their heretical beliefs and practices. This led to a second attack on Multan in 1010. Thousands of the heretics were put to the sword. Abul Fateh was taken prisoner and spent the rest of his life as a captive. The Sultan appointed his own officers in Multan.

Fall of Thanesar

IN 1013 died Anand Pal, the Raja of the Panjab. He was succeeded by his son Trilochin Pal. The new Raja knew how dangerous it was to oppose the Sultan. So he undertook to remain loyal to Ghazni.

There was a big Hindu temple in Thanesar, to the South of the Punjab. In this sacred temple there was a huge idol, named Chakra Swami. The Brahmans gave out that Chakra Swami was very angry with the 'unclean' Muslims and was going to punish their Sultan. That raised new hopes in the hearts of Hindus. The temple at Thanesar became a centre of intrigues against the Sultan.

These reports reached Mahmood. At once he set out to strike at Thanesar. Trilochan Pal was asked to allow passage through his territory. The Raja agreed. Nevertheless, he offered to pay the Sultan a

huge amount of money if he left the sacred temple of Thanesar untouched. The Sultan rejected the offer.

As the Sultan reached the Sutlej, a Hindu Raja blocked his way. The Hindu army was defended by a mountain at the back and a row of elephants in front. The Sultan divided his army into two parts. Then he struck at the flanks of the enemy at one and the same time. The Hindu army was put to rout. The Sultan continued his march to Thanesar.

Hearing of the Sultan's approach, the Raja of Thanesar fled. Mahmood entered the temple. With one blow of his mace, he broke Chakra Swami to pieces. These pieces were taken to Ghazni and buried in the central square of the city, to be trodden under feet by the people. The Sultan thereby hoped to prove to the Hindus that their idol-gods were powerless.

Fall of Nandna

TRILOCHAN PAL'S capital was not Lahore but Nandna, in the Salt Range. The city stood on the bank of the Jhelum. The capital was moved to this place because it was the home of the warlike Khokhars. For recruits to his army, the Raja largely depended on this warlike tribe.

Trilochan Pal himself was a timid man. His son Bhim Pal, however, was a daring young prince. He wanted to be independent of Ghazni. He was particularly upset by what the Sultan had done to the idol-god, Chakra Swami. This made him bold enough to defy the Sultan's authority and to declare himself independent. His father, Trilochan Pal, set off to Kashmir to raise an army for his son.

The Sultan soon came to know about the warlike plans of Bhim Pal and determined to deal with the danger. In the

spring of 1014, he marched on Nandna, and laid siege to the city. Twice did Bhim Pal come out to brave the Muslim army but was driven back each time. At last the city fell to the Sultan.

The Sultan then advanced to meet Trilochan Pal, who was coming from Kashmir with a large army. He, too, was utterly beaten.

The news of these victories spread in the country around This had a healthy effect. The neighbouring Rajas submitted to the Sultan. Many people embraced Islam. The Sultan appointed Muslim missionaries to teach people the principles of Islam. Many mosques were built for the converts. Islam started taking root in the land of the five rivers.

The Ganges Valley Overrun

MAHMOOD had so far overrun the Indus Valley. But the real stronghold of Hinduism was the valley of the Ganges. This valley was ruled by a number of powerful Rajas. These Rajas had been helping the Rajas of Lahore against Mahmood. The Sultan now decided to overrun the rich valley of the Ganges. The way to this valley already lay wide open.

In 1018, Mahmood set off from Ghazni. Passing through the Panjab, he marched along the foot of the Himalayas. It was the month of December when he crossed the Jumna. The Sultan's name struck terror in the heart of people. Cities and forts fell without any serious fighting. The Raja of Blundshahr shut himself up in his fort. After a brief siege, the fort fell. The Raja, with his ten thousand followers, accepted Islam.

Next the Sultan advanced toward the stronghold of Mahaban, on the bank of the Jumna. Kal Chand, the Raja of Mahaban, was greatly feared in the Ganges Valley. He had a huge army, hundreds of elephants and many forts The Raja advanced to meet the invader. Terrible fighting took place. No less than fifty thousand Hindus fell in the battle. Seeing that the day was lost, the Raja killed both himself and his wife.

Mathra, the birthplace of Sri Krishna, was the next target. The temples of this city were the most beautiful in India. The city fell without a fight. The Sultan made a round of the temples. He was amazed at the splendour of their buildings The idols, in most cases, were made of solid gold, set with precious stones. All idols were broken. The Hindu masses saw to their bitter dismay that the so-called gods could not help themselves, let alone helping their votaries. The Sultan left some of his troops in the city and himself marched on the Qannauj.

Qannauj was the capital of the most powerful kingdom of Northern India. The city covered an area of several square miles and was strongly defended. The army of the Raja consisted of thirty thousand horse, eight thousand armoured warriors and half a million foot. However, Mahmood's name struck much terror in the Raja's heart that he fled before the Sultan arrived. After a day's siege, the city fell.

From Qannauj, the Sultan marched back to Ghazni. On the way, he laid siege to many more forts and took them all. At last he was back in the capital, loaded with rich booty. Besides maunds of gold, the booty included thousands of slaves.

As a mark of thankfulness to Allah, Mahmood ordered the building of a big Jam'a Mosque in Ghazni. Indian architects and workmen were set to work. The Mosque when complete, was a model of beauty and workmanship. Soon it came to be known as the 'Bride of the Heaven.' There was a big

library attached to the Mosque. The library contained thousands of select books, on different subjects and in different languages.

Sultan's exploits had brought so much wealth into Ghazni that the city was now overflowing with riches The nobles followed the example of the Sultan and built mosques and libraries. Soon Ghazni became a city of grand public buildings and beautiful gardens. It became one of the most beautiful cities of the East.

The Hindu Alliance

RAJYA PAL, the Raja of Qannauj, had submitted to Mahmood without a fight. When the Sultan was gone, Raja Ganda of Kalinjar was angry with his neighbour. He accused Rajya Pal of cowardice. He also demanded that Qannauj should throw off the yoke of the Sultan. To this Rajya Pal did not agree.

This gave Raja Ganda an excuse to whip-up hatred against Rajya Pal. He was described as the agent of the Muslims. Ganda prepared an alliance of the neighbouring Rajas and attached Qannauj. The Raja of Gawalior was also one of the allies. Rajya Pal fought bravely but was killed. His son, Trilochan Pal, succeeded him as the Raja of Qannauj.

Ganda now became very powerful. He stood for the Hindu cause. Other Rajas came to look upon him as a hero. Even Raja

Trilochan Pal of the Panjab sought his help to win back his old kingdom. Ganda promised him help. A strong Hindu alliance came into being. The Rajas of Kalinjar, Gwalior, Qannauj, and the Panjab joined the alliance, with Ganda as their leader.

Reports of the Hindu alliance reached Mahmood. In the autumn of 1019, he set off from Ghazni. Marching through the Panjab he crossed the Ganges at Hardwar. Raja Trilochan Pal of the Panjab was leading an army to join the allies. By forced marches, the Sultan overtook this army on the banks of the river Ganges. Trilochan Pal suffered a crushing defeat and fled to Kalinjar.

The Sultan now advanced to meet Ganda. The Hindu Raja had a huge army under his command. It consisted of thirty-six thousand horse, forty-six thousand foot and more than six hundred elephants. Before beginning the battle the Sultan made an offer of peace to Ganda.

"Agree to come under the protection of

Ghazni or accept Islam," the offer said.

Ganda rejected the offer.

It was afternoon when the Sultan stood on the top of a hillock and viewed the enemy troops. "What a huge mass of humanity!" he said to himself. Then he bowed his head in prayer and sought Allah's help.

In the evening a party of the Sultan's troops had a sharp encounter with the enemy. In this the enemy suffered heavily and fled. Night soon came on. When morning came the Hindu camp lay empty. In the darkness of the night, Ganda had disappeared in the near-by forests of Central India. He left behind the huge booty. As it was not safe to chase Ganda through unknown jungles, the Sultan made no attempt at pursuit and returned to Ghazni, loaded with fame and rich booty.

Panjab Annexed

FOR three generations, the Hindu Shahi Kingdom of the Panjab had been a source of trouble to Ghazni. Its Rajas had suffered defeat after defeat, had been forgiven and had again became active against the Muslims. Even in the alliance of Ganda, Trilochan Pal was an active member. The Sultan finally made up his mind to put an end to this source of trouble. He decided to make the Panjab a province of his kingdom.

In the winter of 1021, the Sultan led an army into the Panjab. Trilochan Pal's son, Bhim Pal, was now the Raja. He proudly called himself "the fearless." But the self-styled "fearless,' Hindu Raja could not come out for a trial of strength with the Sultan. Without fighting a battle, he fled and took refuge with the Raja of Ajmer. With his death, a few years later, the Hindu

Shahi dynasty of the Panjab came to an end.

After Bhim Pal's defeat, the Sultan annexed the Panjab. He appointed a governor, who lived at Lahore. This new province of Ghazni extended from the Indus to the Sutlej Several military bases were set up in the province. They proved very useful in the future campaigns of the Sultan.

Fall of Kalinjar

RAJA GANDA of Kalinjar was still active against the Sultan. In 1022, Mahmood marched against him a second time. Gwalior lay on the Sultan's way. The Raja of Gwalior was an ally of Ganda. So Mahmood laid siege to the fortress, which stood on a hill-top. The fortress was thought to be impregnable. The Sultan failed to take it by storm. However, fear overpowered the Raja. On the fourth day of the siege he gave in.

The Sultan next marched on Kalinjar. Ganda shut himself up in the fortress. This fortress was stronger than even Gwalior. The Sultan laid siege to it and cut off all supplies. It was not long before Ganda sued for peace. He agreed to become a vassal of the Sultan. Ganda also sent to the Sultan some Hindi verses composed in his praise. The Sultan accepted this offer of peace and lifted the siege. Ganda was

treated with honour and kindness. Not only was he allowed to keep Kalinjar but was also given fifteen more forts and a robe of honour.

The Ganges Valley now lay completely overrun. Its biggest idol temples had been plundered and their idols broken. Mahmood felt happy at the thought that he had exposed the helplessness of the idols to the Hindu masses. With this satisfaction he marched back to Ghazni in the spring of 1023.

The Final Blow to Idolatry

Vain Boasts

FOR centuries the Hindu masses had looked upon their idol-gods as all powerful. It were these gods who seemed in India to rule the destinies of men. For all good things of life, people turned to them. Their displeasure was the most dreaded thing. For the first time Mahmood gave a rude shock to this belief. He smashed the idol-gods of country-wide fame. But no harm came to him. If anything, he grew more and more powerful. He marched from victory to victory.

It was a strange lesson that Mahmood was teaching the Hindu masses. They did not like the lesson, but its truth was too plain to be missed. Hindu masses were set thinking. Perhaps Islam was right after all, they thought, in insisting that idols could do nobody any harm or any good.

The Brahmans were hard put to it to

stamp out such doubts. They invented strange stories to explain away the helplessness of their goods. One of the stories was the one invented by the Brahmans of Somnat. Protected on three sides by the sea and on the fourth by an impassable desert, the temple of Somnat had so far remained untouched by Mahmood. That led the Brahmans of the temple to make wild boasts.

"Somnat is the supreme lord of all gods," they declared. "Other gods got into trouble because Somnat was angry with them. The 'unclean' invader dare not raise a finger against Somnat. If he does, Somnat knows how to deal with him."

These boasts reached the ears of Mahmood.

"What a pity!" he exclaimed. "The cunning Brahmans do not stop befooling Hindu masses. Look at the silly story they have invented! But the simple-minded Hindu masses are sure to believe it. This bubble must be pricked. The vain boasts

of the Brahmans must be exposed, no matter how great the cost."

The Sultan was aware of the difficult nature of the task. He knew what hazard lay on the way to Somnat. But he was determined to risk everything on this campaign. It was announced throughout the kingdom that the Sultan was getting ready for a great crusade against the idolaters. Thousands of volunteers marched to the capital from Turkistan, Khorasan and Afghanistan. In the middle of October 1035, Mahmood started from Ghazni with thirty thousand volunteers in addition to his regular picked troops. A month's march brought him to Multan.

March to Somnat

THE Sultan camped at Multan. Careful preparations began for the trying journey that lay ahead. Between Multan and Somnat lay the waterless wilderness of Rajputana. The crossing of this desert had hitherto been thought a hopeless task. The Sultan, however, was determined that nothing should stand in his way. He was to be fully prepared to meet any emergency. Nothing was to be left to chance.

Each soldier and volunteer was ordered to carry with him food and water-supply to last several weeks. In addition to this, thirty thousand camels carried provisions and water. Thus equipped, the Sultan began his historic march across the desert of Rajputana.

Marching along the hills of Jassalmir, the Conqueror advanced in a south-westerly

direction. A month's journey brought him to Anhalwara, the modern Pattan. Bhim Dev, the Raja of Anhalwara, fled at the Sultan's approach, leaving the city to its fate. Here the Sultan rested his army for a few days, took fresh supplies of food and water and marched on, now to the south.

At Mandher, a Hindu army, twenty thousand strong, blocked the Sultan's way. The Sultan put it to rout. As the Muslim army drew closer to Somnat, the cities and forts that lay on the way gave up opposition. They were sure that Somnat alone was enough to deal with the invaders. A thick misl one day happened to hide the sun. To the Hindus, it was a sign of Somnat's anger against the invaders. They felt sure that Mahmood and his army were walking into a death trap.

On the 6th of January, 1026, the Sultan stood before Somnat at last. He saw that the city had very strong fortifications. The inhabitants of the city jeered at the Muslims, shouting, "Surely our god has drawn you

hither to kill you all. You have insulted other gods: so Somnat has made you walk into the jaws of death. Surely your doom is come. Nothing can save you from it. Get ready to meet it as best you can."

The fort of Somnat had a strong garrison to defend it. Urgent calls were now sent to Hindu Rajas all over the country to rush to the help of their chief god. The Sultan knew that delay would prove dangerous. So he ordered his men to lay siege to the city at once.

The Battle

THE Sultan's men advanced toward the fort and stood under its walls. The walls were lined by jeering crowds. "Glory be to Somnat," they howled out; "that he has made you walk into the death trap." Presently up went showers of arrows, forcing down the jeering crowds of shaven Brahmans. In no time joyous shouts gave place to moans and confusion. Hundreds of Hindus rushed to the temple. They fell on their faces before the idol, weeping and praying for help. The Hindu garrison got ready to beat back the invaders. Some of the Muslims were able to get onto the wall by means of ladders. Fighting went on the whole day till the gathering darkness of night brought it to a halt.

Early next morning fighting restarted. Up went ladders against the wall and the Sultan's men jumped into the city. They

were met by volleys of arrows and spears. All the same, they kept streaming into the city. The defending garrison divided itself into several divisions. By turns they fell upon the invaders and fought desperately. Meanwhile weeping and prayers went on inside the temple. The priests and the people begged the idol to help its votaries. The garrison was feeling hard pressed when the growing darkness of the night again forced the Muslims to retire.

By the morning of the third day, reinforcements for Somnat began to pour in. Before long, formidable Hindu hordes started coming together at the Sultan's rear. To cope with the new danger, he ordered some of his troops to continue the siege. With the greater part of his army he advanceed to meet the Hindu hosts at his back.

A grim battle began. The Hindus fought with a wild courage. The field became wet with blood. As the day wore on, the outlook became more and more gloomy.

Fresh Hindu armies were constantly pouring in. For a time, the Muslims staggered under the blows of the enemy.

The situation was really grave. The Hindu army was swelling every hour. The garrison inside the city could still strike. If Muslims had to win, they must win immediately or they were sure to perish to a man. The Sultan retired to a corner of the battlefield. Jumping down from his horse, he threw himself on the ground in earnest prayer. He wept and prayed to Allah for a victory against the hosts of idolaters. He then remounted his horse and led a violent attack. The Hindus failed to stand before it. Their lines broke and they fell pell-mell, right and left. Soon a general flight followed. Thousands were put to the sword. Many Hindus tried to escape by sea. The Sultan had foreseen this and had posted some troops on the coast. Failing to escape hundreds of the Hindus went down to the water grave.

Somnat Smashed

MUSLIM victory at last proved to the priests that Mahmood was more powerful than their mighty god. Reluctantly they opened the gates of the city. The Sultan walked straight into the temple.

"Let me see your god," he ordered the chief priest.

Through a maze of halls the victor was led into an inner hall, resting on fifty-six pillars. It was so sheltered on all sides that sunlight could not come in. The dim light of candles, reflected through precious stones, produced a perpetual, uncanny twilight in the hall. In the middle of the hall stood the nine-foot high 'Ling Mahadev, hewn from solid rock.

The sight of the ugly 'Ling' filled the victor with contempt. With one thrust of his spear, he chopped off its nose.

"So you are the hateful thing that has received the homage of millions for generations!" he exclaimed in disgust.

He then raised his mace to smash the idol. Seeing this, the Brahmans fell on the victor's feet and begged him to spare their god.

"We promise to pay you any amount in gold and precious stones if you spare Somnat," they said, weeping.

"I am not an idol-seller," the Sultan retorted angrily. "I am an idol-breaker."

Saying this he dealt such a blow with his mace that 'Ling Mahadev' broke into several pieces. Some of these pieces were buried under the steps of the Jam'a Masjid at Ghazni, to be trodden under the feet of the Muslims. Some pieces were sent to Mecca and Medina and were buried there in a like manner.

The Glory that was Somnat

SOMNAT was the chief god of the Hindus. They believed that the souls of all men, after death, went to Somnat. It was he, they thought, who re-sent the souls into the world, in any shape he liked. The temple of Somnat stood on the shores of Kathiawar, at the mouth of the river Saraswati. The waves of the sea constantly struck against the temple walls. To the Hindus, this was an act of worship on the part of the sea. The waves they thought, danced and kissed the temple walls, only to please Somnat. They believed that all other gods were the servants of Somnat. He could, at will, do or undo anything.

People from all over India brought offerings to Somnat. Hindu Rajas had endowned ten thousand villages for the upkeep of the temple. One thousand priests were busy, day and night, worshipping the idol. The Ganges was at a distance of six hundred

miles. Still water from the holy Ganges daily came in for the wash-up of the god. A basket of beautiful flowers came in every day from far-off Kashmir. A chain of solid gold, weighing two hundred maunds, hung in the central hall. Golden bells hung with the chain. The chain was pulled and the bells rang. This was the signal for one party of a thousand priests to go and for the other party to come in. Five hundred dancing girls and two hundred musicians constantly sang the praises of Somnat. Many Rajas had given their daughters for service at the temple. There were three hundred barbers to shave the heads and beards of the pilgrims. At the time of solar and lunar eclipses, millions of people thronged to Somnat.

Such was the glory of Somnat which Mahmood destroyed with one blow of his mace.

Rich Booty

THE booty that fell in Mahmood's hands at Somnat surpasses description. For generations, gold, silver and precious stones had poured into the temple. No Raja in India had a tenth of the riches that belonged to the supreme idol-god. All these riches were now Mahmood's.

The Sultan was determined that no trace of Somnat should remain. He feared that the Brahmans might make another idol after he was gone. So he ordered that the temple be razed to the ground. He saw to it that the order was carried out before he marched back.

Stay in Kathiawar

AFTER the fall of Somnat, Mahmood determined to deal with the Raja of Anhalwara. It was he who had rushed thousands of troops for the defence of Somnat and made the Sultan's position critical. Now that he had finished with Somnat, Mahmood marched on Anhalwara. Hearing of the Sultan's advance, the Raja fled to the island of Khanda, forty miles from Somnat. He thought the Sultan's hand could not fall on him, in this sea-locked fortress. He discovered to his distress, however, that he was mistaken. The victor was on his way to the island. In despair, he fled to some far-off place, leaving behind a fat booty, which fell in Muslim hands.

The Sultan now returned to Anhalwara. He so much liked the mild climate of the place that he made up his mind to stay on in Gujerat. He even proposed to make Anhal-

wara his capital and to leave Ghazni to the son Masood. The nobles, however, did not like the idea.

"We laid down our lives for Khorasan." they pleaded; it is not wise to make this far-off town the capital. We yarn to be back in fair Ghazni."

These pleas aroused in the victor's heart the love of 'fair Ghazni', the city he had done so much to beautify. He gave up his plans of shifting the capital. However, he stayed in Gujerat some month, till the troops were rested. Then he marched back to 'fair Ghazni'.

The Homeward Journey

THE Rajas of Rajputana felt greatly humbled at the destruction of Somnat. They were determined to strike at the Sultan during the homeward march. The Raja of Abu gathered a huge army. The Sultan came to know of the enemy designs. So he decided to march back through Sind, instead of Rajputana. He was loaded with booty and it was unwise to cross swords with the enemy.

The homeward march began. As the desert of Sind was quite unknown to Sultan's men, a priest from Somnat was taken as a guide. But the guide proved treacherous. For a whole day and night, he misled the Muslim army into a waterless wilderness. There was not a drop of water for miles around. Soon it became clear that the guide was playing a trick. So the Sultan put him under arrest and cross-examined him.

"I am a votary of Somnat," he declared,

"and I want you all to perish of thirst. I have done my duty to my god. Now do what you will."

The treacherous priest was at once put to the sword. The Sultan, however, was in a fix. There was no way of leading the army out of the lifeless desert.

Night came on and men lay down to rest their tired limbs. However, there was no sleep for the Sultan. He got out of his tent and began pacing to and fro, with his eyes lifted to the sky. Presently he bowed himself on the ground in earnest prayer to Allah. For a long time he wept and prayed to the Almighty and begged Him to rescue the Muslims.

Then he stood up and looked around. Lo! there was a streak of light on the northern horizon. At once the army was ordered to march in the direction of the light. The march continued for the rest of the night. In the morning the Muslims

found themselves on the banks of a stream of water.

Following the course of the stream, the army reached the banks of the mighty Indus. From here on, northward march along the Indus continued. The Jats of Sind, however, greatly harassed the Muslim army. From their boats in the river, they shot volleys of arrows on the Sultan's men. At last in the spring of 1026, the Sultan was back again in Ghazni.

The Somnat campaign proved to be the crowning glory of the great victor's career. It earned for him an immortal fame. It made him a wonder of his age. His exploits in this campaign eclipsed the exploits of Alexander and other generals of history. The Caliph bestowed fresh titles on the Sultan. Mahmood became the unquestioned hero of the world of Islam.

The Last Campaign

THE Sultan had been harassed by the Jats during his journey through Sind. About a year after his return from Somnat, he marched off to punish them. The Jats had thought that they were beyond the reach of any king, however powerful. Hitherto no army had been able to over-power the light-boats of the Jats that darted across the broad waters of the Indus. But the Sultan was bent on teaching the Jats a lesson they might not easily forget.

Reaching Multan, he prepared a fleet of one thousand boats. Each boat had iron spikes in the front and on the flanks. In each boat sat twenty archers, with supplies of kerosene oil. The archers were to shower burning arrows on the Jats.

The Jats prepared a fleet of four thousand boats to meet the Sultan. They left their

families in the safety of the Indus islands. A terrible battle took place on the waters of the mighty Indus. The Jats fought desperately but were made helpless by the volleys of blazing arrows. The invading fleet was more than a match for them. Their primitive methods failed to be of much help. They met with utter defeat. Many were killed and many more got drowned in the river. In July 1027, the Sultan was once again in his capital.

This was the last campaign of the Sultan. Never again was he to set foot on the Indian soil.

Mahmood's Last Years

Affairs of Central Asia

THE last years of Mahmood's life were taken up by the affairs of Central Asia. The Saljuq Turks were getting more and more powerful. Mahmood's generals found it difficult to deal with them. So they requested that the Sultan himself should take in the hands command of the operations against them. The Sultan had to do this. He, in person, led an army against the Saljuqs and put them to rout. This kept him tied down for quite some time and greatly taxed his energy.

In the meantime the Delmi kingdom of Rayy came to an end. It became part of Sultan's kingdom. But under Delmi rule, Rayy had become a centre of the Qirmati heretics. The Sultan had a great dislike for the Qirmatis. It was natural that he should wipe out heresy from this part of his king-

dom. He was very hard on the heretics of Rayy, killing them by the hundreds.

After restoring order in Isfahan and Rayy, the Sultan made over the government of these territories to his son, Masood. The strain of these campaigns badly told on the Sultan's falling health. He retired to Balkh for rest, and change of climate. This he hoped, would give him back his old health and vigour.

Illness and Death

THE great conqueror contracted malaria in the summer of 1027, when he was fighting the Jats on the Indus The malady became chronic. By and by it developed into tuberculosis. The wasting disease are into the vitals of the Sultan, but he went on attending to his usual duties. Physicians advised complete rest by the Sultan would have no rest. He insisted on fighting against the Saljuqs and the heretics of Rayy.

When at Ghazni, the Sultan used to hold his court twice a day. Once a year, he made atour of the whole kingdom. He insisted on going through this routine even during the illness.

The wasting disease gradually reduced the Sultan to a mere skeleton. However, he would not accept defeat at its hands. He refused to be down in bed. He would sit up,

leaning against pillows, and conduct the usual daily business. Up to the very door of death, Mahmood was the same hero of a hundred battles.

In the summer of 1039, the Sultan went to Khorasan. The change of climate did him no good. The following winter was spent in Balkh. Here he seemed to improve a little. However, the disease was on the increase all the time. In the spring of 1030, he came back to Ghazni. With each day that passed, his condition grew worse. At last on the 30th of April, he quietly passed away. The un-conquerable spirit of the world-famous conqueror, had at last to accept defeat at the hands of death. He was fifty-nine at the time of death. The same evening he was buried in his favourite haunt, the Firozi Garden. Thus ended the inspiring career of a brave son of Islam.

Mahmood's tomb still stands about a mile from Ghazni. The nine centuries that have gone by, have done much damage to the

building. Its doors were removed by Lord Ellanborough, the Viceroy of India. That was done in the mistaken belief that the doors originally belonged to the temple of Somnat. The present rulers of Afghanistan have restored the building to a good shape.

Mahmood as a Man

MAHMOOD was a middle-sized man of sturdy build. He was a loving father and a kind brother. Stern in war, he was always kind to the fallen foe. He never turned down a request for mercy. His enemies sometimes took undue advantage of this tendency. The Rajas of Lahore, in particular, were forgiven a number of times, always to restart their activities against the Sultan. With all these experiences, Mahmood was ever ready to embrace the defeated enemy, only if he promised to be friendly in future.

Mahmood was extremely God-fearing. He often made rounds of the streets of the capital, to see things for himself. On one such round he saw a poor boy, book in hand, sitting at the door of a house. Every few minutes, the boy ran to the neighbouring grocer's shop and had a look at the book in

the light of the lamp. Then he came back to his seat and began learning up what he had read. The Sultan felt greatly touched. He immediatly gave the boy the golden lamp which the servants held for the Sultan.

The same night Mahmood saw a dream. He saw the Holy Prophet, who said to him, "O son of Sabuktagin ? Allah will give you honour both in this world and in the Hereafter. This is your reward for showing kindness to a seeker of knowledge."

Mahmood was extremely kind to his brothers. He gave them high ranks in his gavernment. He was very kind to his sons and brought them up with great care. He was kind and courteous to his nobles. Rank in his court depended on ability alone.

Fear of Allah

THE most outstanding trait of the Sultan's character was his fear of Allah. He had an unshakable faith in Allah, the Almighty. Whenever he found himself in difficulty he always turned to Him for guidance and help. He had also great regard for Muslim saints. He had real respect for people who feared Allah.

Of all saints, Mahmood had the greatest regard for Sheikh Abul HasanKhirqani. The Sheikh lived at Khirqan in Khorasan. Once the Sultan was on a state visit to Khorasan. Some of the provincial officials spoke very highly of the Sheikh and advised the Sultan to pay him a visit.

"I have come on state business," replied the Sultan. "It will be an act of disrespect if I call on the Sheikh now. I will come some other time, purely to call on the Sheikh."

After some time the Sultan set off from Ghazni with the object of seeing the Sheikh. Reaching Khirqan, he sent for the Sheikh. The royal messenger who took the message, said to the Sheikh, "The Sultan is come from Ghazni merely to see you. It will be very kind of you, if you call on him at his camp."

"I have no time to make call on kings," came back the reply.

"But the Quran says," went on the royal messenger, "O believers! Obey Allah and also obey His Prophet and those from among you whom you have raised to authority.'"

The Sultan himself had directed the messenger to give this argument in case the Sheikh refused to come.

Hearing the verse of the Quran, the Sheikh said, "Go back to the Sultan and tell him to excuse me. I am totally taken up by the thoughts of Allah. I confess with

shame that I have neglected to 'obey the Prophet'. How can I have time to obey those 'raised to authority' ?"

When he heard the Sheikh's reply, the Sultan exclaimed, "Here is a truly God-fearing man ! I must go to him."

So the Sultan called on the Sheikh. He sat before him respectfully and begged for spiritual guidance.

"Do four things," was the Sheikh's advice. "Always fear Allah ; say your prayers with the congregation ; spend for the cause of Allah and be kind to the people."

This advice the Sultan never forgot !

With all his love for Islam, the Sultan was tolerant of other religion. He never forced Islam on anybody. He did his utmost to prove to the Hindus the helplessness of idols. But beyond that he did nothing. His army had a regular Hindu Division, with Hindu officers. In Ghazni, there was a

Hindu quarter. Hindus had full freedom of religion and worship.

The Sultan was also tolerant as between the different sects of Islam. However, he did not tolerate the Qirmati heretics. This was because these heretics violated the ordinary moral code in the name of religion.

Throughout the kingdom, the Sultan had appointed censors of public morals. These officials saw to it that people were honest in their dealings and observed the common moral code. Mahmood was very hard on people who had no moral scruples. "There can be difference of opinion in the matter of faith," he said, "but there can be no two opinions about the basic moral values."

Sultan's Justice

MAHMOOD dealt out justice with an even hand. His justice made no distinction between a prince and a commoner. Masood, the eldest son of the Sultan, once owed some money to a merchant of Ghazni. He delayed the payment. The merchant feared that he was going to lose his money. So he made a complaint to the Qazi of Ghazni. Immediately the Prince paid the merchant in full. He knew full well that if the matter came to the Sultan's notice, things would go hard with him.

A high military officer once did something against Islamic Law. He was put under arrest and whipped publicly.

Robbers once looted a caravan in a far off part of the kingdom. An old woman came to the Sultan with the complaint that her son had been looted and killed by the dacoits.

She demanded justice from the Sultan.

"Old woman," said the Sultan, "how can I maintain law and order in such a far off part of the kingdom?"

"If you cannot do that," the woman spoke back, "why do you keep the province under your rule?"

The Sultan saw the woman's point. He at once gave her enough money to cover her loss. Then he personally visited the place and strictly dealt with the culprits.

Mahmood as a Soldier

MAHMOOD is one of the greatest generals of history. For forty years, he led armies but not even once did he meet defeat. He was less than thirty when he became king. His rare ability, however, very soon made him the wonder of his age. He overran vast tracts, from the Ganges Valley to the Caspian Sea and from Samarqand to Rayy. No power or combination of powers was ever able to halt his victorious march His military exploits came to sound stranger than the stories of *The Arabian Nights*.

Mahmood's victories, however, were not the result of happy accidents. He planned and worked for them His rare military genius and wonderful daring were at the root of all his successes. No detail of a campaign escaped his notice. He was brave and fearless. No difficulty was too great for him. He never allowed an unforeseen situation to

overwhelm him. Whenever he found his men faltering, he put a new heart into them by his own example.

Mahmood knew no fatigue. By forced marches he rushed from one country to another and always gave a surprise to his enemies. Once he had carefully thought out a plan, he lost no time in giving effect to it.

In short, Mahmood had all the qualities of a great soldier. It was after centuries that the world of Islam had produced a soldier statesman of such rare calibre.

A Great Patron of Letters

WITH all his military exploits, Mahmood was a great patron of letters. He tried to assemble in his court the best poets andscholars of the age. Among the poets was Firdausi, the author of the famous *Shahnama*. Among scholars was Abu Rehan Alberuni This great scholar lived in Indiafor several years, studied the customs and practices of the Hindus and described them in his world-famous book *Kitab-ul-Hind*. No other book describe the Hindu society of that time with great accuracy and detail.

The Sultan himself was a scholar and poet. He kept his diary, in which he jotted down important notes of his campaigns. Unfortunately, the diary has been lost to the world, or it must have shed revealing light on our hero.

The Sultan was also found of beautiful buildings. Nor did he forget the works of

public utility. One of the canals constructed by him is serving the people of Ghazni to this day.

In short, Mahmood was a man of broad culture. He was a patron of the arts of war and peace alike. The beautiful city of Ghazni, with its gardens, fine buildings, libraries and schools, furnished the best testimony to the Sultan's refined taste.

Spread of Islam

MAHMOOD is the first Muslim ruler who carried the banner of Islam to the heart of India. True, he himself was not a missionary, but several Muslim missionaries followed his flag. The most notable among these was Sheikh Ali Hajveri, known to us as Data Ganj Bakhsh. This Saint-Scholar came to Lahore from Ghazni. He settled here and silently carried on his work as a missionary. He wrote several books on the teachings of Islam. Some of the books have come down to us. The Saint died in 1072 and is buried in Lahore.

Among some frontier tribes and some tribes of the Panjab, the Sultan himself sent missionaries to spread Islam.

THE END

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